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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

CIVIL STRIFE IN LATIN AMERICA: A LEGAL HISTORY OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT. By William Everett Kane, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1972). Pp. 229. $10.00.

"No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever in the internal or external affairs of any other state. . . ." This declaration of nonintervention is found within the Charter of the Organization of American States. The Charter is significant not only for its prescription of United States-Latin American relations, but also because it is the United States' strongest commitment to non-intervention. With this understanding, William Kane writes a political history, in *Civil Strife in Latin America: A Legal History of United States Involvement*, that lays bare the interventionary activities that have comprised this relationship.

The author explains that within a juridical context, measures short of war provide the parameters of non-intervention. Notwithstanding this definition, the author believes that intervention takes more covert forms, such as the granting of foreign aid to achieve a political end. In this latter and broader sense, United States involvement in Latin America has been historically hyperactive.

When Latin America broke from European control in the 1790's, United States' fears of continued European lodgement prompted rapid recognition of local insurgent governments. This fear was based on both commercial and national security self-interests.

Shortly thereafter, the Monroe Doctrine was created to prevent European recapture of her lost influence through military intrusion. The Doctrine seemingly fused Latin American internal affairs to United States' national security. However, the Doctrine quickly fell into disuse as Europe became more attentive to her own local matters.

The advent of Mahan's geopolitical thinking, designating seapower as the key to U.S. military safety, caused the resurrection of the Monroe Doctrine late in the nineteenth century. Keen interest was displayed in the building of a canal to provide U.S. naval mobility. Canal construction also implied U.S. control of the Caribbean, thus the infusion of the Monroe Doctrine into this later setting.

Kane interprets the Spanish-American War as the United States'

first illegal intervention within the juridical standard. U.S. behavior was precipitated by the plight of a weakened Spain and by the potentiality of a stronger European power entrenching itself in Cuba as a result of future European turmoil. The U.S. military victory was sweetened by the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution which authorized the maintenance of U.S. Naval bases on the island.

The diversity of U.S. interventionary techniques is to be seen with the acquisition of the Virgin Islands. U.S. military strategists noted that the military technology of the early 1900's required a Caribbean base as a prerequisite to an attack on the U.S. mainland. As a preemptive measure, the U.S. purchased the Virgin Islands to foreclose German lodgement and thereby conclude a potential German threat to U.S. security.

During the next half-century, U.S. interventionary activity and thinking remained remarkably consistent despite brief intervening periods of isolationist feeling. Kane concludes that this ossification of U.S. thinking has produced the recent unwieldy Latin American policies that attempt to cope with the Latin American brand of Communism. The author comments that the U.S. has failed to properly identify Communist activity. An example is the State Department's characterization of Romulo Betancourt. While Betancourt declared his opposition to Communism in 1959, the State Department had stamped the Venezuelan leader as a Communist.

Kane perceives Sino-Soviet influences in Latin America as weak and fragmented. Required to move from a small ideological base, Communist activist must ally with a country's broader based nationalistic reform movements. This misinterpretation of Communist activity can only becloud effective foreign policy formulation.

The U.S. has placed an improvident emphasis in the makeup of its foreign aid packages to Latin America. Mr. Kane states that while Latin America has consistently requested economic aid, our country has primarily provided military aid. The thrust of these gifts was to provide Latin American governments with stability while establishing a responsive relationship with the influential Latin America military establishment. This policy has proved to be constrictive rather than constructive. The U.S. has been so closely identified with ruling juntas that our country has become handicapped in her relationships with later successful insurgent forces. United States assistance to Cuba's Batista provides an example of the harmful consequences of this policy.

Kane views Latin American participation in multinational organizations as a response to Yankeephobia and as a hope to check future interventionary acts. The author indicts the O.A.S. as a rubber stamp of U.S. policy with limited enforcement powers. The organization's impotence is illustrated by U.S. involvement in the Bay of Pigs incident.

Kane's analysis concludes that interventionary techniques of the past are no longer tenable nor will they be tolerated in the future by world opinion. Yet, a structure like the O.A.S. could encompass both U.S. and Latin American interests and provide a valueable and viable framework for U.S. policy.

Only minor criticism can be offered upon reading Kane's lucid and pragmatic analysis. Although the author punctuates the historical relationship between our country and Latin America with excellent scenarios illustrating his viewpoint, additional background information should have been supplied. Despite this drawback, the author has provided an informative and cogent analysis.

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